FINAL REPORT

20010397

ON FARM FOOD SAFETY - QUALITY ASSURANCE TRAINING FOR SASKATCHEWAN'S HORTICULTURE SECTOR

March 31, 2005
Funded by the Agri-Food Innovation Fund

Prepared by: Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association

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On-Farm Food Safety Quality Assurance Training for Saskatchewan's Horticulture Sector

Project # 20010397
Final Report
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Agri-Food Innovation Fund
Quality Assurance Sector

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In Association with: Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association
Saskatchewan Vegetable Growers Association
Saskatchewan Greenhouse Growers Association
Saskatchewan Nursery Trades Association
Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers Association

Abstract

This project had six main objectives that would enable Saskatchewan to take a leading role in on-farm food safety for horticulture producers. Firstly, provide train-the-trainers instruction to four horticulture consultants in the province. Secondly, provide funding for these trainers to train provincial horticulture producers. Thirdly, provide an On-Farm Food Safety manual to all producers. Fourthly, create publications and brochures provincially for the horticulture groups. Fifthly, relate good news stories regarding OFFS in horticulture publications. Sixthly, cover administration costs for the program. All the objectives were met and there is continuation to train producers trained in on-farm food safety and safe produce handling practices.

Project Summary:

This project had six main objectives: 1) To provide train-the-trainers instruction to four horticulture consultants in the province; 2) To provide funding for these trainers to train provincial horticulture producers; 3) To provide an On-Farm Food Safety manual to all producers; 4) To create publications and brochures provincially for the horticulture groups; 5) To relate good news stories regarding OFFS in horticulture publications and 6) Program Administration. We were able to meet all the objectives and are continuing to train producers trained in on-farm food safety and safe produce handling practices.

Technical Report:

Background and Objectives

The objective of this project is to have access to trained trainers for horticulture in Saskatchewan and provide appropriate manuals and materials to horticulture producers. This initiative enables Saskatchewan to take a leading role in on-farm food safety for horticulture producers. Trained trainers allow the province to have experienced staff that can attend and speak at grower meetings and conferences. It also provides Saskatchewan with the expertise and personnel to deliver the program to producers when the need arises. Most other provinces have taken these courses, and now have government employees, private consultants and field representatives from grower organizations who are officially trained.

Provincial governments have taken a leadership role in On-Farm Food Safety programs in many other provinces. They have seen the benefits in having accredited personnel on-hand to ensure that produce originating from their province is safe. The Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) holds the CHC's On Farm Food Safety Program as the standard for fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada.

Project Activities

1) Train the Trainer Session

Pat Edgeworth, a food safety trainer from the Guelph Food Technology Centre came to Regina and provided training to four individuals (Peter Charles – greenhouse, James Waldheim - fruit, Oliver Green – vegetables and Elaine Waldner – vegetables) in the horticulture industry. This was a four day intensive session that educated our consultants on the national guidelines. The manual that Ms. Edgeworth taught from was created by the Canadian Horticulture Council. All four individuals received the training, as did four members of SAFRR (Glen Sweetman – greenhouse and nursery specialist, Clarence Peters – fruit specialist, Andrew Sullivan – vegetable specialist and Terry Grajczyk – quality assurance specialist).

2) Presentations to Producer Groups

Once training was completed, consultants then went out and provided sessions to provincial horticultural producers on the objectives in the manual. Upon completion each participant received a manual and a certificate stating that they had completed the training session. The following education sessions were held:

Doug Powell – OFFS Specialist/Instructor – University of Guelph – Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers Annual Meeting in Saskatoon
James Wiens – February 2003 – two day OFFS training course in Saskatoon
Elaine Waldner – February 2003 – two 2 hour introductory session to vegetable growers in Humboldt
Elaine Waldner – March 2003 – two hour introductory session – two one hour presentations to growers at Saskatchewan Vegetable Growers Association Annual Conference in Outlook
Oliver Green – March 2003 – two hour introductory session - two one hour presentations to growers at Saskatchewan Vegetable Growers Association Annual Conference in Outlook
Oliver Green – March 2003 – one hour talk in Nipawin to area growers on OFFS
Elaine Waldner – February 2004 - two day OFFS training course in Melfort
James Wiens – February 2004 - two day OFFS training course in Saskatoon
Oliver Green – March 2004 - two day OFFS training course in Regina
James Wiens – February 2005 - two day OFFS training course in Saskatoon

3) Educational Materials

The manual "On-Farm Food Safety Guidelines for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables" was developed by a cross-commodity committee of horticulture producers through the Canadian Horticulture Council. This manual serves as the guideline for producers who wish to implement on-farm food safety programs to their operations. 400 manuals were purchased to ensure that all horticultural producers across the province will have access to the manuals once they finished their two day training session.

4) Education Material – Provincial

Funds were spent in this sector on developing the program and mail-outs for the training sessions. Printing costs were also included in this section.

5) News stories

Stories that related to food safety appeared in the following Saskatchewan horticulture newsletters:

Vegbytes: Newsletter of the Saskatchewan Vegetable Industry

- October 2001 – "On-Farm Food Safety Programs – Why Should I be Interested?"
- April 2002 – "Food Safety Extends Beyond the Farm"
- July 2002 – "National On-Farm Food Safety Strategy Underway"
- January 2003 – "On-Farm Food Safety"
- January 2004 – "On-Farm Food Safety Training for 2004"

Spudnotes: Newsletter of the Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers Association

- Summer 2003 – "On-Farm Food Safety Committee and Potato Working Group"
- Winter 2003 – "New Program to build on Canada's Food Safety and Quality Systems"

Results and Conclusions

The main result from this project is the commencement of on-farm food safety training for horticultural producers in the province. There was a perceived need for this training in all commodities as consumers are demanding safer food. Now that this has begun in the province our growers can adapt their growing practices to reflect safe food handling practices. This also places them in a good position if needs or regulations change in the future that affects their commodities.

There are now on-farm food safety consultants in place in the province and they plan to continue training new producers as requested.

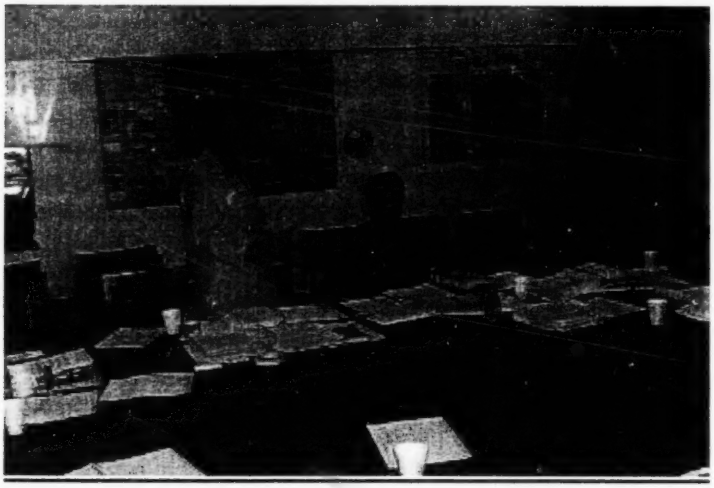
Performance Indicators

There were 26 farms and approximately 40 people that attended the two day on-farm food safety training sessions over the past three years. There were approximately 45 people that attended the introductory sessions that were put on in the spring of 2003. Approximately 90 potato producers attended the food safety presentation that was put on by Dr. Doug Powell.

In conversations that were held with growers once they had completed their two day training course, many had similar comments in that they found the information useful and

that they were already implementing many of the safe food handling and storage practices that were mentioned in the presentations.

Project Photos



Pat Edgeworth – OFFS Trainer from Guelph Food Technology Centre

Innovation Fund Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement of the funding provided by the Agri-Food Innovation Fund (AFIF) was given at each training session and was provided in brochures that were sent out on-farm food safety program in assorted newsletters also acknowledged AFIF funding.

The Saskatchewan Horticultural Associations (Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association, Saskatchewan Vegetable Growers Association, Saskatchewan Greenhouse Growers Association, Saskatchewan Nursery Trades Association, and the Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers Association) would like to thank the Agri-Food Innovation Fund for providing funding that allowed the associations to begin training in on-farm food safety for their operations.